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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2005

THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER THREE THEMES:

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HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL

`Friendly Fire' Crisis Between Italy, US - Hurriyet
Zarkawi Operation in Samarra - Hurriyet
Iraqi Assembly to Convene March 16 - Milliyet
US, UK, France Urge Immediate Syrian Pullback - Milliyet
Lebanese People Divided Over Syrian Withdrawal - Sabah
Washington Post Claims Turkey Killed 1.5 Million Armenians -
Aksam
Turkish Truck Driver Killed in Iraq - Hurriyet 3/6

OPINION MAKERS

Washington Post Lists Turkey Among `Criminal' Countries -
Yeni Safak
French Ruling Party Offers Privileged Partnership for Turkey - Cumhuriyet
`TRNC PM' Talat Wants Presidency - Zaman
US Launches Samarra Operation to Get Zarkawi - Radikal
Venezuela's Chavez Accuses US of Using Nerve Gas in Fallujah - Cumhuriyet 3/6
CIA Interrogated 9/11 Suspects Outside the US - Yeni Safak
Powell: No Need to Use Military Force Against Iran - Yeni Safak
Tehran Warns US Not to Play With Fire - Cumhuriyet 3/6
Assad Signals Gradual Withdrawal From Lebanon - Radikal 3/6
US Finds Assad's Pledges for Withdrawal `Ambiguous' - Radikal
Hizbullah Calls for Support for Syria - Yeni Safak

BRIEFING

US Treasury Praises Turkish Economy: US Deputy Treasury Secretary John Taylor said that Washington is very pleased

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by the positive economic developments in Turkey, Monday papers report. `Turkey has taken steps forward toward a better fiscal policy. Those measures are working,' Taylor said.

30,000 Turkmen Forced to Leave Tal Afar - Turkmen Representative: Mahmut Kasapoglu, Chairman of the Iraqi Turkmen Solidarity Organization in Ankara, charged that ongoing joint American-peshmerge operations and `looting' in Tal Afar are aimed at removing the Turkmen presence that stands between the Syrian Kurds and the northern Iraqi region controlled by Barzani, "Yeni Safak" reported on Sunday. Over 3,000 families have left Tal Afar since September of last year, Kasapoglu said. Removing Turkmen from Tal Afar would cut off geographical contact between Turkey and the interior parts of Iraq, he added. Kasapoglu called on Turkey to support the Turkmen population in Tal Afar.

EU Encourages Ankara for More Reforms: Turkey must do more to implement the political reforms it enacted before membership talks with the European Union begin in October of this year, European Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn said on Sunday. Rehn stressed after talks with FM Abdullah Gul that it is important that Turkey maintain forward momentum on legal, political, and economic reforms. He added that Turkey must do more to eradicate torture, expand cultural rights and the rights of women, and protect non-Muslim minorities. Rehn also said he received assurance from FM Gul that Ankara would sign the EU protocol related to Cyprus before October 3. Rehn said that signing the protocol would not amount to recognition of the Republic of Cyprus, and encouraged Ankara to move quickly on the issue.

Turkey's Directorate of Foundations Blocks Return of Minorities' Assets: The rights of Turkey's non-Muslim minorities have not been protected in a new law on religious foundations despite a warning from the MFA Reform Monitor Group, "Radikal" reported on Monday. The MFA had asked the Directorate of Foundations to either return the assets of minorities or pay a compensation fee. Otherwise, the MFA believes, Turkey will face lawsuits in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and the issue will be viewed as a form of pressure against religious minorities. However, the Directorate of Foundations opposed the change in its regulation, and decided that the return of assets to minority groups is not possible.

Police Detain Women's Rights Protestors: Turkish police on Sunday detained dozens of protesters after using pepper spray and batons to break up a demonstration by women's rights supporters in Istanbul. A group of around 150 people gathered in Istanbul's Beyazit Square ahead of International Women's Day on March 8. Police intervened to disperse the group and detained 59 people, including 29 women. Television footage showed police beating protesters, including women, with batons and kicking them as they lay on the ground.

Turkish Cypriot Parties Agree to Form Coalition: The two leading Turkish Cypriot parties - the CTP of Mehmet Ali Talat and the DP led by Serdar Denktas - have agreed to form a coalition government following parliamentary elections in north Cyprus last month. The present cabinet will remain in place until the April 17 presidential elections that will be held in the enclave. CTP leader Mehmet Ali Talat is expected to enter the presidential race.

Another Turkish Driver Killed in Iraq: A Turkish truck driver was killed by Al-Qaeda militants near Mosul in Iraq on Saturday. The driver had been ferrying goods to US forces. The identity of the driver was not immediately available.

EDITORIAL OPINION: Transatlantic Relations; Syria

"The Show Staged by George Bush" Kamuran Ozbir observed in the nationalist "Ortadogu" (3/7): "President Bush spent a rather long time in the three countries that were against the war in Iraq. He had meetings with French president Chirac, German PM Schroeder, and Russian President Putin. The goal of President Bush's visits to the European Council and the EU Commission were to show that he believes in European integration. There are many reasons for both sides to show their people that they are friends. The first and main reason is that, whether people like it or not, George Bush will be in the White House for the next four years. Another reason is that since US military forces are very much stretched in Iraq, the Europeans know that the US will not attack Iran or some other country in the near future. Moreover, the Europeans think this is a good chance for them to defend the use of 'soft power' in resolving the Iran crisis. There is no sign in Bush's latest remarks that he is abandoning his 'for us or against us' rhetoric which has so grated on the Europeans. Germany, France, and the British have urged President Bush to support their continuing talks with Iran within the framework of UN Security Council resolutions. Bush should consider this position seriously. Moreover, President Bush should consider Europe's view that the arms embargo against China should be lifted. For their part, the Europeans should accept the US point of view that Hizbullah is a terrorist organization. Europe should take a broader role in training Iraq's security units. The era in which the US and Europe were under Soviet threat is now in the past. Now, both sides perceive the threat in a different way, yet each side still needs the other. European and US leaders should now demonstrate that the US and Europe can act like allies when it is necessary."

"The Common Front Against Damascus, and Turkey's Position" Yasemin Congar wrote in the mass appeal "Milliyet" (3/7): "The US administration has adopted the language of democracy for the Middle East region. This rhetoric has been given greater impulse after the elections in Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq, and, most recently, the anti-Syria demonstrations in Lebanon. Washington's argument in favor of democracy highlights that the reality in this region is changing. Therefore, every anti-democratic administration must take this fact into consideration. What's more, democratization rhetoric is now being used by everyone in this region, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Both President Bush and Secretary Rice are calling on capitals in the region not to be 'out of step' with the trend toward democratization. . Every step toward democracy, whether large or small, is positively noted. Even local elections in Saudi Arabia, where women were not allowed to take part, were regarded as an 'insufficient but important step for democratization.' In Turkey, meanwhile, we see that a group of Turkish intellectuals and journalists has traveled to

Damascus to `express solidarity' with the Syrians `against a US threat.' The Turkish Foreign Minister said last week that President Assad is `beloved by his people and needs to be strengthened.' If we read Turkish newspapers, we would assume that only the United States is pressuring the Syrians to withdraw from Lebanon. In fact, the Europeans, the Russians, and even the Arab League are calling for the same thing. It will be interesting to see where Ankara will place itself on the democratization issue, and whether it will continue its `different line' on the Syrian issue."

EDELMAN